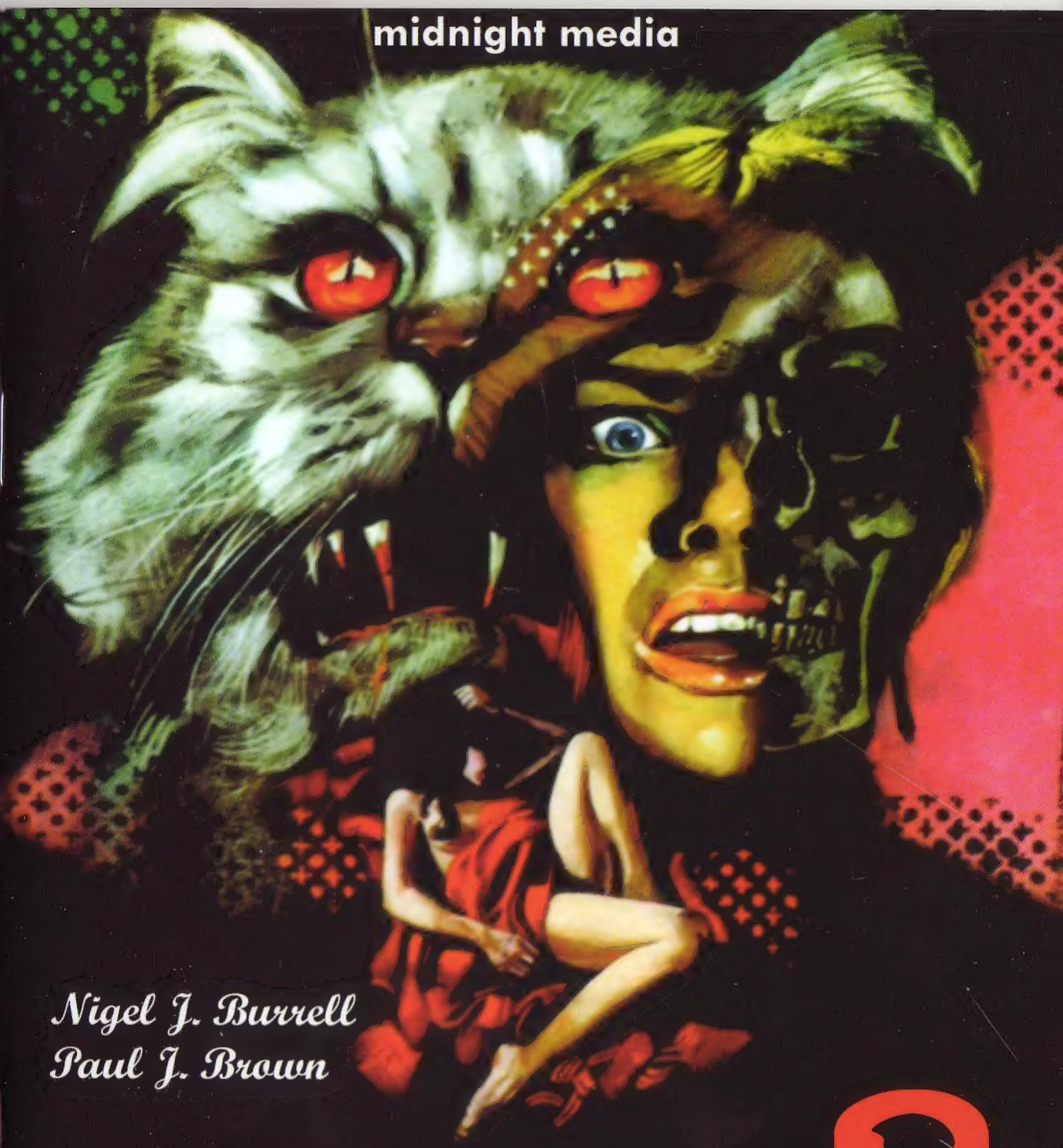


midnight media



Nigel J. Burrell
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giallo² scrapbook



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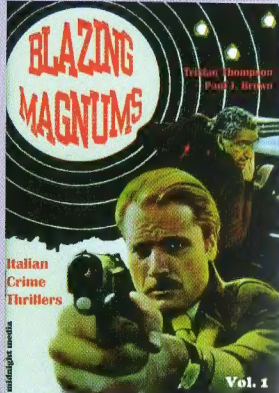
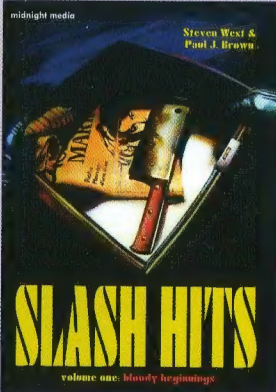
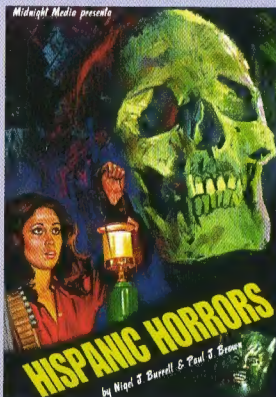
Front Cover illustration: original Italian poster art for **SEVEN DEATHS IN THE CAT'S EYE**. Back Cover illustration: original promo art for **BLACK BULLY OF THE TARANTULA** (featured in Volume One). This page: **DEATH WALKS ON HIGH HEELS**.

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The **Giallo** - Italian Thriller Chillers. Seriously enjoyable films that weave insane plotlines with splashy and colourful visuals. Blood-soaked dementia with lashings of operatic violence set to the tunes of easy-listening beats... Following on from our popular first volume, Midnight Media is proud to present another batch of **Gialli** for the discerning *cineaste* to savour. The purpose of these scrapbooks is not to study in-depth, but to present some of the well known and not so well known titles for quick reference in a style that's both fun and easy on the eye. So, sharpen up your steel blade, slip on some black gloves and enjoy the contents of **Giallo Scrapbook 2**.

Paul J. Brown (Editor, *Is it Uncut?*)

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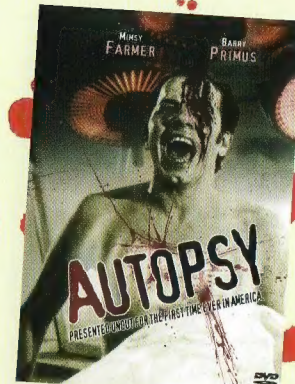


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autopsy



Simona Sanna (Mimsy Farmer), a pathologist studying for a thesis on real and faked suicides, begins to hallucinate from stress; she imagines that corpses in the Rome morgue where she works are returning to life, even making love before her... An unduly hot summer is causing a rash of suicides blamed on "sun spots", and one of Simona's neighbours, Betty Lennox (Gaby Wagner), apparently shoots herself. Simona, convinced this death is suspicious, sets out to discover the truth with the help of Betty's brother, Father Paul Lennox (Barry Primus), much to the annoyance of her sexually frustrated boyfriend Edgar Fiorini (Ray Lovelock). More 'suicides' lead Simona to believe her own life is in danger...

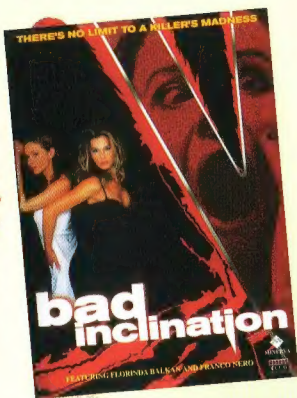


After a truly shocking intro sequence of grisly suicides, and a bizarre quasi-necrophiliac hallucination set in a morgue, Armando Crispino's **AUTOPSY** settles into a more routine giallo groove, encompassing sexual frigidity, a dodgy Catholic priest and blackmail. There's even a hint of incest stirred in for good measure. Unfortunately the film's opening death montage will have raised expectations for more than the convoluted plotline that follows, and Mimsy Farmer's lethargic performance is alienating, though perhaps in keeping with a mentally unstable, sexually repressed woman suffering through a heatwave! Barry Primus is out-to-lunch as a revenge-seeking, epileptic priest, and Ray Lovelock's piggish character is repellent. To keep the film on the boil, director Crispino throws in a gratuitous attempted rape by a sleazy morgue assistant (Ernesto Colli). The film has an appropriately sweaty, morbid and claustrophobic feel to it, and the most horrific images come courtesy of photographs of real suicide and murder victims... Hawk-eyed viewers may spot a subliminal hardcore porn image too. Ennio Morricone contributes a fittingly discordant score for this imperfect but intriguing genre entry.



Alternative Title: *Macchie Solari* / *Tension!* / *The Victim* / *Frissions D'Horreur*
Year of Production: 1973
Directed by Armando Crispino
Cast: Mimsy Farmer, Barry Primus, Ray Lovelock, Carlo Cataneo, Angela Goodwin, Gaby Wagner
Running Time: 100 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Anchor Bay (USA), X-Rated (Germany)

bad inclination



A luxury apartment block in Rome is rocked by a series of bloody murders, apparently committed by the same person, although Rita (Mirca Viola), the woman cop in charge of the case, feels there may be a copycat killer cashing in... It is likely that the killer is one of the tenants, but the investigation is hampered by people exploiting the situation for their own twisted ends - can the Police trap the killer - or killers - before yet more victims are slashed to death?



A worthy but seriously flawed attempt by director Pierfrancesco Campanella to revive the *giallo* for the 21st Century results in a lurid, over-plotted pastiche that looks right but lacks the soul of the real thing... Proficiently filmed and lit, with an interesting retro-chic look, and benefiting from the presence of a few familiar faces from the past (Florinda Bolkan and Franco Nero), there is no doubt that the enterprise was well-intentioned. Bolkan's character (a wonderfully bitchy painter of sadistic murder fantasies) is rather better used than the 'blink and you (hopefully) might miss him' appearances by Franco Nero as a laughable bearded and hippy-wigged drunkard ex-Cop ranting about the sins of the World etc... Transsexual star(let) Eva Robin's (sic) (**TENEBRAE**) has fag-hag freak potential but no discernable acting talent and her 'love scenes' are cringe-inducing, as are the crapulous English dub and the "what the f**k!?" cop-out ending... The cheesy rubber-torso gore effects are wonderfully splattery (a steel set-square is the weapon of choice by the killer(s) here!), and the high nudity and lesbian-sleaze levels bring **BAD INCLINATION** into line with lesser Seventies black-gloved killer thrillers as epitomised by Andrea Bianchi's **STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER**.



Alternative Title: Cattive Inclinazioni
Year of Production: 2003
Directed by Pierfrancesco Campanella
Cast: Florinda Bolkan, Guido Berti, Elisabetta Cavallotti, Rosaria De Cicco, Franco Nero, Antonio Petrocelli, Eva Robin's, Elisabetta Rocchetti, Mirca Viola
Running Time: 95 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Shriek Show (USA), Eagle (Italy)

bloodstained butterfly



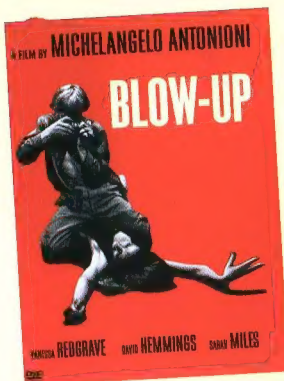
Shortly after the shocking murder of a young female French student in a park, the police haul in well-known TV sports commentator Alessandro Marchi (Giancarlo Sbragia), the evidence implicating him as the assassin. Unknown to Alessandro, his defence lawyer Giulio Codrero (Gunther Stoll) is having an affair with his wife Maria (Evelyn Stewart), and his case is being fought with less than warranted vigour as a result! After Alessandro's conviction and imprisonment, more murders occur, leading to his release from detention. So just who IS the killer?



Opening with a bravura credits sequence that cheekily segues Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1 for piano into a smooth 'n' easy Jazz-lounge tune, Duccio Tessari's **BLOODSTAINED BUTTERFLY** takes off tune, effortlessly with the first murder, a superlative sequence that begins with a body rolling down a hillside in front of two terrified children, then follows the killer's lengthy flight from the scene of the crime itself... Curiously the film then veers away from the graphic depiction of flick-knife slayings, as subsequent stabbings are off-screen, the character-led plot instead becoming involved in the forensic investigations and courtroom proceedings. Whilst this may disappoint fans of the *giallo* genre's more traditionally splattery approach, **BLOODSTAINED BUTTERFLY** is a top-notch thriller, with Helmut Berger turning in yet another impassioned, twitchy performance as crazy pianist Giorgio and Silvano Tranquilli excelling as dogged cop Inspector Berardi. Good twist to the tale here too, making this a film to rank alongside other more well-known *gialli* from the early Seventies.



Alternative Titles: Una Farfalla Con Le Ali Insanguinate / Una Mariposa Con Las Alas Ensangrentadas
Year of Production: 1971
Directed by Duccio Tessari
Cast: Helmut Berger, Giancarlo Sbragia, Evelyn Stewart, Silvano Tranquilli, Gunther M. Stoll
Running Time: 97 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Medusa (Italy), Manga Films (Spain)



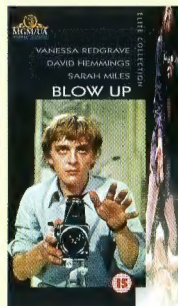
blow-up



A jaded fashion photographer (David Hemmings) - increasingly tired of his shallow lifestyle - apparently records an unfolding crime in a London park whilst photographing a pair of lovers. The woman in the photos, Jane (Vanessa Redgrave), begs the snap-happy young man for the relevant pictures, and intrigued by her persistence he examines the developed roll of film closely, enlarging portions of the images. Is that a man with a gun in the bushes? And could that be a corpse partially hidden behind a tree? Finally finding some impetus in his life, he sets out to corroborate his suspicions, but how can he prove to his uninterested friends the existence of what he too is unsure of?

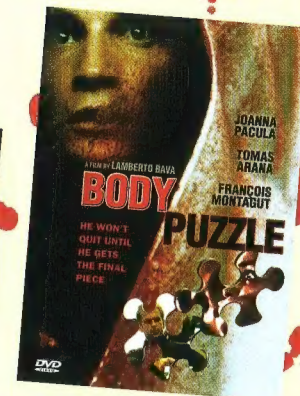


Director Michelangelo Antonioni subverts the *giallo* rulebook by presenting the viewer with a thriller that has no resolution and an infinite variety of interpretations. Clearly both in love with and slightly appalled by the vibrancy of mid-Sixties 'Swinging London', Antonioni shows us the city as only an outsider (with Leftist leanings) can, and populates it with otherworldly characters whose own aimless, drifting lives and shallow personalities complement that of Hemmings himself, whose nameless photographer - egotistical, homophobic and sexist - finds purpose and stimulation through the deadly puzzle he is attempting to piece together. Has a crime even occurred in the first place? How much is in the mind of the photographer, whose grip on reality at times appears tenuous? Sprawling, languid, beautifully filmed and composed, **BLOW-UP** is a feast for the senses and the mind, and the ambiguous and surreal ending goes only some way towards 'explaining' the plot, and has proved exasperating to those who demand all loose ends should be firmly knotted at a film's conclusion. Hemmings' scenes with Vanessa Redgrave fairly sizzle, and his notorious romp with two teenage groupies allegedly features the first glimpse of female pubes in a mainstream film. A brief appearance by **THE YARDBIRDS** ends in WHO-style guitar destruction... cool! Dario Argento allegedly hated this film so much that he reworked it in his own more visceral *giallo* **DEEP RED** (1975), which of course also features David Hemmings in top gear...



Alternative Titles: Blow Up / Blowup
Year of Production: 1966
Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni
Cast: David Hemmings, Vanessa Redgrave, Sarah Miles, Jane Birkin, John Castle, Peter Bowles, Veruschka Von Lehndorff, Susan Broderick
Running Time: 111 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Warner Bros. (USA)

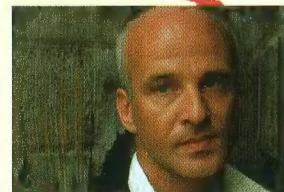
body puzzle



A young widow, Tracy (Joanna Pakula), is terrorised by a psychopathic slasher prone to letting himself into her house and depositing body parts pilfered from his victims in her fridge... The police are always one step behind the busy killer. One of the cops, Michael (Tomas Arana) begins a relationship with Tracy. As the body parts stack up, it seems that an obsessive male 'admirer' of Tracy's late pianist husband Abe is behind the slayings... Can this sicko be tracked down in time to spare future victims?



Lamberto Bava's ongoing career has veered wildly at times, from very good (1987) with a smattering of okay to good titles interspersed irregularly (**BLADE IN THE DARK** (1983), **DEMONS** (1985), **YOU'LL DIE AT MIDNIGHT** (1986)). Sadly this film counts as tosh, mainly due to an overly sloppy and downright ridiculous plotline - even by *giallo* standards! - which has more holes than a Swiss cheese... Less of a throwback to the classic Seventies Italian *gialli* Eighties, **BODY PUZZLE** eases back on the gore a tad (despite its grisly titular theme), with several murders being almost totally bloodless. Along with the bland overall look to the film, this means **BODY PUZZLE** resembles little more than a beefed-up American TV movie, rather than a full-bodied pasta-much either, leaving only François Montaut shining as the OTT psycho-killer. Standout scene has a teacher being butchered in front of a class of unsuspecting blind kids, one of whom gets a faceful of arterial gore from the unfortunate woman's severed throat! If only the rest of this dismal film matched this bravura sequence...



Alternative Title: Misteria
Year of Production: 1992
Directed by Lamberto Bava
Cast: Joanna Pakula, Tomas Arana, François Montaut, Gianni Garko, Erika Blanc, Giovanni Lombardo Radice
Running Time: 94 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Madacy (USA), Prism Italy (Italy)

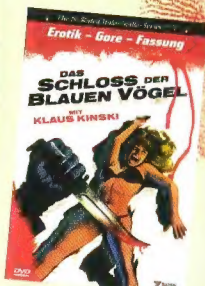
the cold-blooded beast



Wealthy female patients of a private psychiatric clinic run by the eccentric Doctor Clay (Klaus Kinski), are targeted by a vicious cloaked killer, who uses a variety of ancient weapons and torture devices to carry out his bloody crimes... Victims are axed, stabbed, decapitated, impaled by cross-bow bolt... even dispatched via a handy Iron Maiden! A trap is set for the killer by Doctor Clay and the police, but the murderer goes on one last, brutal mace-swinging rampage...



Sleazy beyond the bounds of decency, daft beyond belief, **COLD BLOODED BEAST** is perhaps the single most deranged giallo ever lensed... Klaus Kinski is perfectly cast as the shifty-looking, chain-smoking Doctor Clay, typifying to perfection the phrase "Physician heal thyself", as he appears as certifiable as his loopy patients, who include the luscious Rosalba Neri as a shameless and largely naked sex-addict (say no more!). Add in hefty doses of inter-racial lesbianism, nymphomaniacal bonking, drizzle healthily with gouts of gore, stir well and Di Leo's cinematic concoction is sure to please those viewers with a taste for the ridiculous! Some prints include near-hardcore-porno inserts of female masturbation, and no definitive version exists of this grubby shocker. The blood-drenched final massacre is loosely based on the real-life Richard Speck case. Dumb, depraved and totally irresistible Euro-Trash!

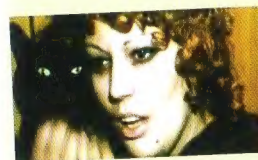


Alternative Titles: La Bestia Uccide A Sangue Freddo / Slaughter Hotel / Asylum Erotica
Year of Production: 1971
Directed By Fernando Di Leo
Cast: Klaus Kinski, Rosalba Neri, John Ely, Margaret Lee, Monica Strebel, John Karlson
Running Time: 97 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Shriek Show (USA), Raro (Italy), X-Rated (Germany)

crimes of the black cat



Whilst drinking in a Copenhagen bar, blind composer Peter Oliver (Anthony Steffen) overhears a woman being blackmailed, but the conversation is drowned out by juke-box music. Shortly afterwards Peter's ex-lover Paola Whitney (Isabelle Marchall) - a model - is found dead at her agency in mysterious circumstances. Suspicion falls on the blind musician, who lives alone but for his faithful butler Burton (Umberto Raho), and Peter must set out to clear his name by unmasking the real killer, who is casting a shadow of death and fear over the streets of "wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen" as more women fall victim to a most bizarre murder weapon...



Rarely have gialli ever turned out as weird as Sergio Pastore's amusingly trashy and violent **CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT**. One has grown used to the most *outré* giallo killer motives and extravagant methods of murderous mayhem, but this Copenhagen-set thriller arguably tops the lot! Though saddled with a somewhat ponderous lead role from top-lining Anthony Steffen (Antonio de Teffe), whose role is based on (but markedly inferior to) that of Karl Malden in Dario Argento's **CAT O'NINE TAILS**, the supporting cast is stuffed full of reliable giallo regulars like Umberto Raho, Sylva Koscina and Giacomo Rossi-Stuart. The comic-book storyline, owing a debt to Mario Bava's **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** along with several key Argento gialli, rattles along at a hectic pace, never for a moment becoming dull. Razors slash through throats and naked breasts with grisly abandon, especially during the notorious and oft-trimmed shower murder scene which takes Hitchcock's seminal blueprint to its logical extreme. Photographed somewhat unimaginatively in a sub-Bava fashion, and with a less than scintillating score from Manuel De Sica, **CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** does however throw up a few memorable scenes, like the **ORPHEE**-inspired woman who stalks the streets swathed in a white hooded cloak, the "what's in the basket" shocks that predate **BASKET CASE** by nearly a decade and the already-mentioned shower stall butchery. The bleak Northern European city setting also makes a pleasing break from the usual Italianate backdrops associated with this genre.



Alternative Title: Sette Scialli di Seta Gialla
Year of Production: 1972
Directed by Sergio Pastore
Cast: Anthony Steffen, Sylva Koscina, Giacomo Rossi-Stuart, Umberto Raho, Jeannette Len, Renato De Carmine, Annabella Incontrera, Isabelle Marchall, Romano Malaspina
Running Time: 96 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Dagored (Italy)

death carries a cane



Kitty (Susan Scott), a Swedish photographer working in Rome, witnesses a woman's murder from afar through a telescope. Nobody believes Kitty's story, especially the Police and her boyfriend Alberto (Robert Hoffman), until a corpse is indeed discovered in the indicated locale. Shortly afterwards a chestnut seller - who had seen the killer fleeing the scene - has his throat brutally slashed by the assassin. More victims follow as the killer seeks to cover his tracks. Police surmise the killer is a cripple, causing suspicion to fall on Alberto who has recently sprained his ankle, but he is himself convinced the key to the mystery lies in the fact that all the female victims were dancers. Can Kitty and Roberto crack the case before the limping killer catches up with them?



DEATH CARRIES A CANE seems to have few fans these days, but is it really as bad as some critics have implied? It delivers in both the flesh and blood departments, with nearly every attractive woman in the film disrobing at the slightest excuse, and the straight-razor murders are sufficiently grisly and filmed in extreme close-up. The fast-moving, lurid and trashy plotline is sardine-packed with Red Herrings, but it becomes fairly clear who the killer is towards the end, though his motive is too glibly explained (and weak) to truly satisfy. Robert Hoffman is rather bland as a lead character, and it seems strange the Police would be so certain he is the vicious black-clad, floppy-hatted, leather-gloved killer merely because he stabs stuffed dummies for his Art (an admittedly weird hobby!). Susan Scott (Nieves Navarro) is nearly always good value for money, whether clothed or - as is the case here - frequently naked, and you won't feel out of pocket during her scenes (though the 'pee-pee' jokes wear a bit thin). Simón Andreu, as the impotent and intense composer Marco, gets to cavort with the luscious Anuska Borova as well as tickle the ivories (lucky him). The fact that the director and photographer seemingly contrived to film **DEATH CARRIES A CANE** in the grubbier, most rundown parts of Rome adds to the downmarket sleaziness of the proceedings. Photography and musical score are somewhat nondescript throughout, though a scene where an old lady is terrorised and killed during a black-out is an effective highlight. Dumb but fun best sums up this film, which is better all round than Maurizio Pradeaux's later **DEATH STEPS IN THE DARK**.



Alternative Titles: Passi Di Danza Su Una Lama Di Rasoio / Die Nacht Der Rollenden Köpfe / Tormentor
Year of Production: 1973
Directed by Maurizio Pradeaux
Cast: Robert Hoffman, Susan Scott, George Martin, Anuska Borova, Simón Andreu, Rosita Torosh, Luciano Rossi
Running Time: 84 mins. approx.
DVD Label: X-Rated (Germany)

death steps in the dark



When a young French woman is stabbed to death on the crowded Istanbul-Athens Express, Italian photographer Luciano Morelli (Leonard Mann / Leonardo Manzella) is the obvious suspect, as it is his letter-opener that has been used in the killing. Aided by his loopy Swedish girlfriend Ingrid (Vera Kruska) and a dodgy petty criminal, Luciano sets out to clear his name. In the meantime the real culprit is working through the list of potential witnesses to the original crime. Athens runs with blood as the killer's razor goes to work with a vengeance...



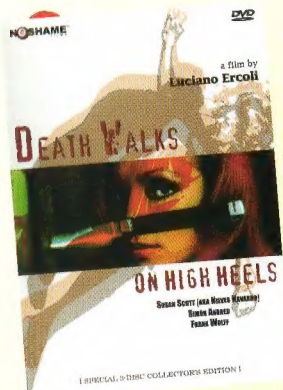
By 1976 the *giallo* was falling out of favour with Italian audiences (violent cop thrillers being the new buzz), and this late entry into the stalk and slash thriller cycle, a co-production between Greece and Italy, did little to alter the fact that the glory days were over. Indeed the script does its best to send up the genre, with some hit and miss humour amongst the graphic throat-cuttings and disembowelings, including a daft scene in which Luciano disguises himself - complete with wig, short skirt and a very Gay mince - as an Athens prostitute! Swedish women get a bum rap here too through Vera Kruska's irritatingly ditz character... The unmasking of the killer is pretty daft stuff even by *giallo* standards, and director Maurizio Pradeaux's tired screenplay re-runs scenes lifted from his own **DEATH CARRIES A CANE** (1973), to little avail. Riz Ortolani's score isn't up to much either. Leonard Mann is a likeable enough hero though, and the bloodshed is suitably extreme, so **DEATH STEPS IN THE DARK** isn't a total wash-out, merely a bit wet...



Alternative Titles: Passi Di Morte Perduti Nel Buio / Death Steps
Year of Production: 1976
Directed By Maurizio Pradeaux
Cast: Leonard Mann, Robert Webber, Vera Kruska, Nino Maimone, Barbara Seidel, Imelde Marani, Albertina Capuani
Running Time: 94 mins. approx.
DVD Label: NoShame (Italy)



death walks on high heels



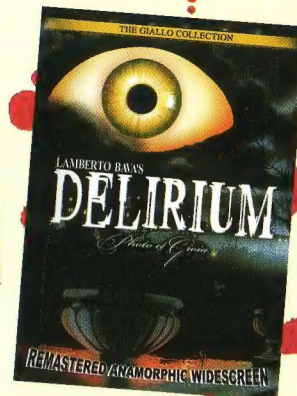
A jewel-thief is knifed to death following a diamond robbery. His daughter Nicole Rochard (Susan Scott), a Parisian stripper, is threatened by a masked man seeking the missing gems. Fleeing from this threat, as well as her abusive, drunken boyfriend Michel (Simón Andreu), Nicole absconds to England with an unhappily married and rich admirer, Dr. Matthews (Frank Wolff). Tucked away from the world in a quiet seaside cottage, Nicole is assured that she is safe, but later winds up drowned in the sea. Dr. Matthews is wounded by a gunshot in his surgery, and his wife is brutally butchered. The police - led by the determined Inspector Matthews (Carlo Gentili) - suspect Michel, who has followed Nicole across The Channel...

A heavily plotted, dodgy-suspect-cluttered storyline is but one of the attractions of this lurid thriller from Luciano Ercoli, and is altogether more fast-paced than his earlier **FORBIDDEN PHOTOS OF A LADY ABOVE SUSPICION**. Way more violent too, with some disturbing sexually-tinged scenes of women being threatened and slashed up by the unknown killer... Perhaps a tad sprawling, the film's *longueurs* are balanced by well-chosen location photography, especially in the UK. The isolated seaside cottage makes a suitably lonely setting for much of the unfolding drama. Attractive Susan Scott (Nieves Navarro) is ideal as the heroine who may be more than she seems and who is killed off Hitchcock-style long before the clever plot-twist that ends this enjoyable *giallo*. Stelvio Cipriani donates another of his stand-out scores, and the supporting cast provides a 'who's who' of Italian genre staples, including creepy Luciano Rossi as a transvestite handyman! **DEATH WALKS ON HIGH HEELS** provides kinky thrills and blood-spills in abundance.



Alternative Titles: La Morte Cammina Con I Tacchi
Alt / Death Stalks in High Heels
Year of Production: 1971
Directed By Luciano Ercoli
Cast: Susan Scott, Simón Andreu, Frank Wolff, Carlo Gentili, Luciano Rossi, George Rigaud, José Manuel Martin, Fabrizio Moresco
Running Time: 107 mins. approx.
DVD Label: NoShame (USA/Italy)

delirium



Gloria (Serena Grandi) owns a successful soft-core porn mag called 'Pussycat'. One of the magazine's models is pitchforked to death in Gloria's garden - overseen by her wheelchair-bound neighbour Mark (Karl Zinny) through his telescope - but when the police arrive the body has vanished. The killer later delivers a macabre photo of the slain woman to Gloria, the corpse posed in front of a semi-nude poster of Gloria herself... Meanwhile Gloria's jealous ex-employer Flora (Capucine) is angling to buy out 'Pussycat', which is outselling her own publications. The murderer strikes again, even killing Gloria's brother Tony (Vanni Corbellini). Will Gloria be the final victim of this deranged psycho?

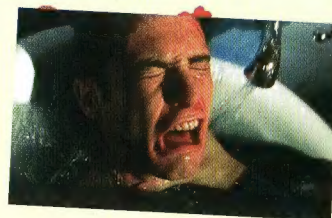


Following on from his own *gialli* **A BLADE IN THE DARK** (1983) and **YOU'LL DIE AT MIDNIGHT** (1986), Lamberto Bava gave us this sporadically interesting but ultimately inferior thriller. Yet another *giallo* set around a fashion house, this one is less thrilling than earlier examples due to the incredible naughtiness of the late Eighties clothes on display - murder (or suicide) may well be on your own mind after you've checked out some of the fashion-crimes worn by the cast! The idea of having one see the twisted POV of the killer manifest as hallucinations (victims with an eyeball for a head or insect features...) sounds better than it appears onscreen, but adds a suitably weird edge to what is otherwise a humdrum outing for all concerned. The almost alarmingly top-heavy starlet Serena Grandi is okay as the severely-hassled Gloria, and some amusement can be gained from a brief appearance by George Eastman (**ANTHROPOPHAGOUS**, **ABSDURD** etc.) and **DEMONS** star Karl Zinny sleazing it big time as the pervy neighbour who later redeems himself. The finale is suitably sick and sexually intense, with lashings of homicidal incest and blood-vomiting, but **DELIRIUM** is not a film you'll feel inclined to return to very often.



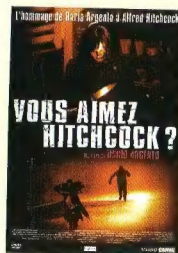
Alternative Title: Le Foto Di Gioia
Year of Production: 1987
Directed by Lamberto Bava
Cast: Serena Grandi, Daria Nicolodi, David Brandon, George Eastman, Karl Zinny, Vanni Corbellini
Running Time: 90 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Shriek Show (USA), General Video (Italy)

do you like hitchcock?



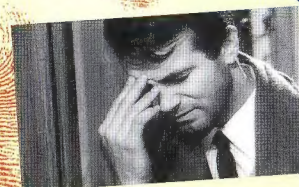
When a woman (Milvia Marigliano) is brutally bludgeoned to death in the building opposite his flat, geeky film buff Giulio (Elio Germano) becomes convinced that the murder has been modelled after Alfred Hitchcock's **STRANGERS ON A TRAIN**... He begins following Sasha (Elizabetta Rocchetti), the dead woman's daughter, and her friend Federica (Chiara Conti), certain they are guilty of the crime. This obsessive behaviour causes rifts between Giulio and his girlfriend Arianna (Cristina Brondo), and also brings him into considerable danger. Is Giulio on the right track with his theory, or going totally off the rails?

After the frankly disappointing **THE CARD PLAYER**, hopes didn't run too high for Argento's TV movie, a pilot for a planned series of Hitchcock *homages*. In the event the Turin-set **DO YOU LIKE HITCHCOCK?** turned out to be a decent enough *giallo*, disguising its small-screen look with some effective and well-lit photography and a few jolts of graphic violence that are as well-choreographed as those from classic Argento outings from the Seventies and Eighties (though the killer wears *white* gloves here!). The finale is particularly nerve-racking if you suffer from vertigo... Elio Germano is largely believable in the central role, though some of the supporting cast are not so impressive. The opening childhood flashback sequence goes nowhere, adding little to the main plot. Sadly the export prints feature the by now expected lousy English dubbing, which proves distracting and overshadows the many good points elsewhere. All things considered, **DO YOU LIKE HITCHCOCK?** is not at all the expected disaster some longstanding Argento fans were predicting (and which some would still have you believe), and even Hitch himself might have enjoyed spotting the many references to his movies!



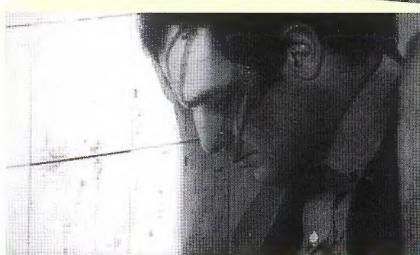
Alternative Titles: Ti Piace Hitchcock? / Vous Aimez Hitchcock?
Year of Production: 2005
Directed by Dario Argento
Cast: Elio Germano, Chiara Conti, Elizabetta Rocchetti, Cristina Brondo, Ivan Morales, Elena Maria Bellini, Milvia Marigliano
Running Time: 93 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Anchor Bay (USA), Studio Canal (France), Flamingo Video (Italy)

la donna del lago



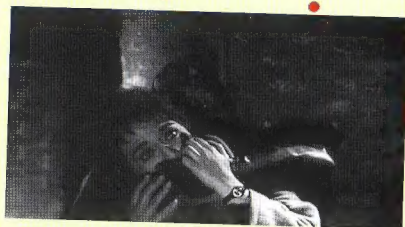
Bernard (Peter Baldwin), a writer, returns to a wintry lakeside hotel he had visited the previous year, looking for Tilde (Virna Lisi), a serving girl he conducted an affair with. He is shocked to learn she is dead, apparently from suicide. However, the local photographer Francesco (Piero Anichisi) informs Bernard that he suspects Tilde was murdered by the hotel manager Enrico (Salvo Randone) - her lover - having refused to abort her pregnancy... Enrico's surly son Mario (Philippe Leroy) turns up, with his wife Adriana (Pia Lindström), who seems to be almost held prisoner in the hotel. After trying to contact Bernard, she too is found dead. The dreadful mystery deepens around the hapless writer...

In **LA DONNA DEL LAGO**, his first film, Luigi Bazzoni turns in a genuinely creepy and unnerving Noir-ish thriller that benefits immensely from an intelligent script co-written by Giulio Questi, himself no slouch at directing offbeat thrillers (**DEATH LAID AN EGG**) or crowd-pleasing Spaghetti Westerns (**DJANGO KILL... IF YOU LIVE, SHOOT!**). Some viewers might be put off by the slow, indeed almost somnambulistic, pace of the plot, the disconcerting dream sequences and flashbacks and in particular the eerie black and white photography that at times lends the film an Expressionistic look, but if that's so it's their loss - Bazzoni's film is a minor masterpiece of mood and encroaching paranoia that wouldn't have worked nearly so well in Sixties Technicolor. All the cast give superlative performances, especially Peter Baldwin in the demanding central role, and Virna Lisi's sexy blonde Tilde maintains a ghostly presence throughout the unfolding drama. Though not really a *giallo* as most people would understand the form, **LA DONNA DEL LAGO** contains enough 'flashing blade and blood' imagery in the gripping finale to bring it within the fold, and it also points forward to Bazzoni's later **FOOTPRINTS** (1974), which trod similar thematic paths.



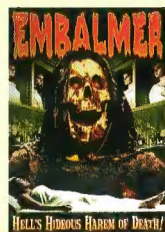
Alternative Titles: La Mujer Del Lago / The Possessed
Year of Production: 1965
Directed by Luigi Bazzoni & Franco Rossellini
Cast: Peter Baldwin, Virna Lisi, Philippe Leroy, Salvo Randone, Valentina Cortese, Pia Lindström, Ennio Balbo, Piero Anichisi
Running Time: 84 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Filmax Home Video (Spain)

the embalmer



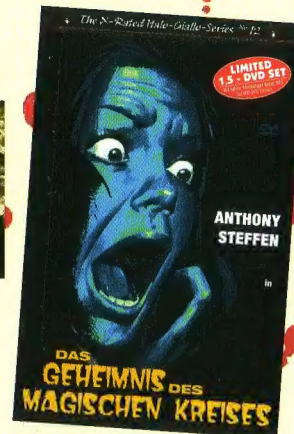
A mysterious killer stalks the canals and catacombs of the waterlogged city of Venice, kidnapping, murdering and embalming young women. In his underground lair he keeps a positive harem of stuffed corpse brides... A young journalist, Andrea (Luigi Martocci) believes these disappearances - which are puzzling the clueless local cops - are the work of a sex maniac and sets out to prove his theory. As the hotels fill up with visiting tourists, providing potential victims for the frog-suited assassin, can Andrea track down **THE EMBALMER** before he strikes again?

Released in a truncated English-dubbed print as **THE EMBALMER**, Dino Tavelli's modest little black and white *giallo* is more in tune with the Edgar Wallace-inspired German *krimis* than the Latin model, but can at least claim to have influenced the much later, and far superior, Dutch thriller **AMSTERDAMNED**, which also featured a frogman-killer utilising canals to stalk his victims. Placed alongside other contemporary Italian genre directors such as Mario Bava and Riccardo Freda, it is clear that Tavelli isn't in the same league, but **THE EMBALMER** does have its moments amongst the thinly-sketched characters and 'comic' interludes. The monk-cowled, skull-masked killer's underground lair is suitably gothic, and the row of preserved women in his 'Temple of Beauty' proves an eerie sight, ultimately far more memorable than the film's ho-hum chase finale. One of the earliest films to hint at necrophilia as the killer's motive, as in Freda's **TERROR OF DR. HICHOCK**. Even in this relatively mundane film Venice proves to be a perfect backdrop for the creeping killer, and would feature again and again in future *gialli*. A generally agreeable timewaster, and the nightclub sequences alone are schlock highlights (an old lady frantically doing The Twist, and a creepy Italian Elvis wannabe emerging from a coffin!)...



Alternative Titles: Il Mostro Di Venezia / Monster of Venice
Year of Production: 1964
Directed by: Dino Tavelli
Cast: Maureen Lidgard Brown, Luigi Martocci, Luciano Gasper, Anita Todesco, Viky Del Castillo, Francesco Bagarin
Running Time: 77 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Retromedia (USA), Alpha Video (USA)

eroticofollia



Wealthy playboy Peter Crane (Jorge Rivero) is suffering from terrifying nightmares in which he is threatened by Satanic figures... Later Peter meets a French woman, Yvonne Chevrel (Lone Fleming) who recounts that she too has bad dreams, in which she is murdered by him. When Yvonne goes to Peter's house one night, a demonic force takes control of him and he strangles her... As Peter's grip on sanity slips further, more mysterious deaths occur, and he turns to the family doctor, Dr. Stone (Richard Conte) for assistance. However, nothing seems to help, and Dr. Stone's attractive assistant Dr. Turini (Eva Vanicek) whisks the troubled young man off to her rural retreat. However, once more Peter becomes the centre of terrifying supernatural events that threaten to overwhelm him and his attractive companion... Can Inspector Ranieri (Anthony Steffen), belatedly realising the truth, manage to save them?

EROTICOFOLLIA is a bizarre, sometimes confusing and irritating film, nonetheless remaining watchable throughout due to an abundance of attractive women, sufficient nudity and a smattering of gory images. Whilst other *gialli* have flirted with occult overtones (**ALL THE COLOURS OF THE DARK**, **PROFONDO ROSSO** etc.), Mario Siciliano's film goes into supernatural overload. Thus we have peripatetic furniture and ornaments, ghostly apparitions and - in a nod to the then recent success of **THE EXORCIST** - people vomiting green slime and frogs... It doesn't add up to anything other than empty-headed Euro-trash entertainment, bobbing along to the strains of an often chirpy Stelvio Cipriani score. Still, Jorge Rivero is fine as the beleaguered Peter Crane, whose onscreen girlfriend Targa is played by erstwhile 'Miss Italy' Daniela Giordano, and Richard Conte is suitably enigmatic. Anthony Steffen gives a largely lacklustre performance as the copper puzzled by the unfolding events, though a scene where he is lured into a near-fatal trap offers one of this film's more genuinely creepy moments. Viewers will recognise Lone Fleming from Amando de Ossorio's films **TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD** and **THE RETURN OF THE EVIL DEAD**. Various versions of **EROTICOFOLLIA** exist, with a long-lost Mexican edit purportedly the longest. The Italian print under review ends somewhat unsatisfyingly, with a rushed feel as if the script simply ran out of ideas, and there's even an insulting 'was it all a dream' coda... Pah! Certainly not a *giallo* highpoint, but this Italian-Spanish co-production is still worth at least one look if you keep your expectations low.



Alternative Titles: Molocchio / Das Geheimnis Des Magischen Kreises / The Evil Eye
Year of Production: 1974
Directed by: Mario Siciliano
Cast: Jorge Rivero, Richard Conte, Anthony Steffen, Lone Fleming, Eduardo Fajardo, Pilar Velázquez, Daniela Giordano, Eva Vanicek
Running Time: 89 mins. approx.
DVD Label: X-Rated (Germany)

the etruscan kills again



During the excavation of an Etruscan tomb near Spoleto, a young couple are brutally bludgeoned to death, their bodies laid out ritually by the killer. Suspicion soon falls on archaeologist Jason Porter (Alex Cord), a known violent alcoholic, especially as he cannot fully recall his movements due to booze-induced memory loss. More killings ensue, and Jason finds his life further complicated by his attempts to win back his ex-girlfriend Myra (Samantha Eggar), now married to the domineering and neurotic conductor Nikos Samarakis (John Marley). An evil force seems to have been set free by the dig - is the killer inspired by the Etruscan demon Tuchulcha? Jason must find out before it's too late...



An interesting giallo variant in part based on a Bryan Edgar Wallace short story which, like Lucio Fulci's **DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING**, takes place in sun-baked rural locations rather than the usual urban settings associated with the genre. Director Crispino discards the iconic black-gloved, razor-toting killer for a heavy-breathing, club-wielding assassin who appears almost supernatural at times, underlining this with close-ups of photographs of the repellent Etruscan deity Tuchulcha. Of course it's obvious that there is a human force at work here, but this demonic imagery adds a suitably creepy edge to the proceedings. Alex Cord makes for a deliberately charmless 'hero', but the viewer still manages to sympathise with his plight as the odds stack up against him. The eternal triangle formed by Cord, the attractive and well-cast Samantha Eggar and the larger-than-life character played by John Marley (seen in **THE GODFATHER** the same year and in Bob Clark's **DEATHDREAM** (1974)) makes for some tense moments. Riz Ortolani's lush score is simply gorgeous, on a par with his noted themes for **MONDO CANE** and of course **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**. Visually there is much to enjoy, in particular a marvellous sequence of two mummified Etruscans collapsing to dust as the outside air hits them when a tomb is breached, and good use is made of Spoleto's winding, tenebrous streets. Violence is brief but very bloody, and the finale is superb, making **THE ETRUSCAN KILLS AGAIN** more than the timewaster some have labelled it.



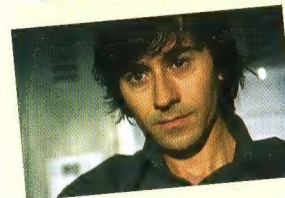
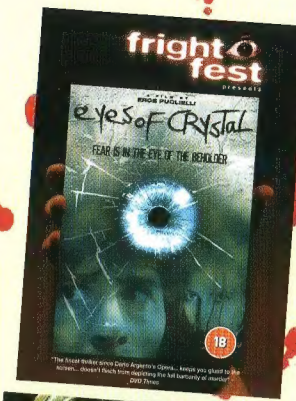
Alternative Titles: L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora / The Dead Are Alive
Year of Production: 1972
Directed by Armando Crispino
Cast: Alex Cord, Samantha Eggar, John Marley, Nadja Tiller, Enzo Tarascio, Horst Frank, Vladan Milasinovic, Carlo De Mejo, Daniela Surina
Running Time: 105 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Eurovista (USA)



eyes of crystal



When a courting couple and the old man spying on them are shot to death by a cold-blooded killer, the strange mutilation of the female victim leads Inspector Amaldi (Luigi Lo Cascio) to fear that this is the start of a serial killer rampage. So it proves, with the murderer removing limbs and other body parts from his unfortunate victims, leaving doll-parts sewn on as replacements... Meanwhile Amaldi's boss Ajaccio (Simón Andreu) is slowly fading away in hospital from a brain tumour; the killer leaves clues in his room, and there may be a connection between the dying man and the assassin. But what?



Eros Puglielli delivers a solid 21st Century giallo that borrows style-riffs from US films like **SE7EN** and also recent Iberian chillers, in particular Jaime Balaguer's **LOS SIN NOMBRE** (1999) (**EYES OF CRYSTAL** was partly financed by Spain after all...). Despite the killer's black gloves there are remarkably few retrovisual homages to the Seventies, unlike Dario Argento's great **SLEEPLESS** (2000) or - more obviously - Pierfrancesco Campanella's trashy sleazefest **BAD INCLINATION** (2003). Puglielli is a director determined to re-invigorate an old art form. Indeed, apart from a few sections where the cameraman gets over-excited and induces whiplash the bang-up-to-date look of the film works to perfection. The gore is occasionally graphic, never gratuitous, and Puglielli cranks up the tension in the run-up to the slightly disappointing finale which features a frankly shoddy CGI killer-falling-down-a-cliff shot that hardly improves on the tumbling plastic dummy in Lucio Fulci's 1972 rural giallo **DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING** (and is also curiously bloodless given earlier carnage)! Luigi Lo Cascio is spot-on in the demanding lead role, and works well with female co-star Lucía Jiménez, and it's a buzz to see giallo veteran Simón Andreu (**DEATH CARRIES A CANE**, **DEATH STEPS IN THE DARK**) return to the genre.



Alternative Title: Occhi Di Cristallo
Year of Production: 2004
Directed by Eros Puglielli
Cast: Luigi Lo Cascio, Desislava Tenekedjieva, Simón Andreu, José Ángel Egido, Lucía Jiménez, Carmelo Gómez, Eusebio Poncela
Running Time: 107 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Fright Fest - Revolver Entertainment (UK), 01 Distribution (Italy)

the fifth cord

footprints



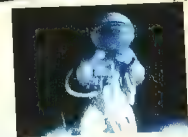
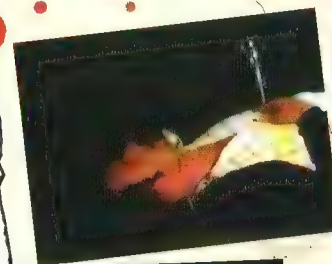
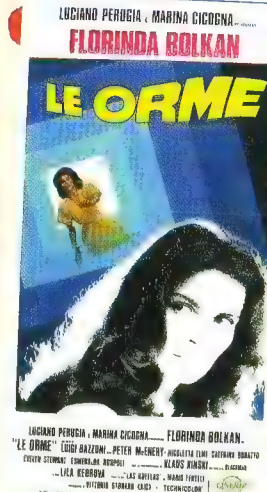
After a New Year's party, Dr. John Lubbock (Maurizio Bonuglia) is assaulted as he walks home through a tunnel. Drink-sodden reporter Andrea Bild (Franco Nero) is assigned the story, but finds his investigation hampered by Dr. Bini (Renato Romano), a colleague of Lubbock... When Dr. Bini's crippled wife is murdered in her home, Andrea finds himself in the frame as suspect, especially when his unsupportive editor also winds up dead. As the bodycount rises, Andrea must navigate a sea of sleaze, pornography and murderous intrigue to uncover the assassin who is seemingly framing the hapless scribe...

One of the more interesting and well-made *gialli* from the early Seventies, Luigi Bazzoni's **THE FIFTH CORD** is often unfairly written off as a cheap Argento cash-in. I disagree. Containing every genre cliché you could ever wish for, the agreeably sordid storyline - which takes in prostitution and amateur porno films along the way - builds to a riveting and masterful sequence in which a young boy, home alone, is terrorised by the psycho (whose motives are not entirely convincingly explained) whom he has unwittingly locked inside the house with him... The final chase of the kill-happy culprit by Franco - whose drunken journo is often presented unsympathetically - through a dilapidated factory is corking stuff too. Bazzoni's film certainly gives value for money in the black-gloved-killer-thriller stakes, with suitably stylised violence, interior decor which has rarely looked so cool, the fullest use of striking modern architecture - enhanced by a variety of distorting lenses and clever 'scope framing - in external scenes, (courtesy of camera wiz Vittorio Storaro), and a typically groovy Ennio Morricone score. F.A.B!



Translator Alice Cespi (Florinda Bolkan), haunted by strange and threatening dreams inspired by an old Sci-Fi film she once saw, awakes one morning to find that the previous three days of her life are missing - she has no recall of them at all. Finding the torn fragments of a postcard in her kitchen, which shows an old hotel, Alice is led to the rundown Turkish resort of Garma, where she finds people seem to know her as another woman called Nicole... With the help of a sullen young girl called Paula Burton (Nicoletta Elmi), and a young man, Harry (Peter McEnery), Alice begins to uncover the truth, but will this expose her to danger from the sinister forces she feels sure are watching her?

A haunting, disorientating film, suffused with a feeling of impending dread courtesy of the surreal black and white Sci-Fi 'dreams' experienced by Florinda Bolkan's troubled character, in which the truth has to be pieced together much like the torn postcard that sets Alice Cespi off on her fateful journey to Garma. The faded, decaying holiday resort town - with its mosques, minarets and still-grandiose hotel - makes an ideal if melancholic backdrop to Mario Fanelli's convoluted plot (based on his own novel 'Las Huerras'). With its focus on characters who have taken on assumed names/identities (Alice and Nicoletta Elmi's gawky gamine Paula Burton), the film almost becomes a Nabokovian conundrum. **FOOTPRINTS** builds slowly but inexorably to a tragic and violent climax, capped with one of the most bizarre end sequences you're likely to see, as Alice's growing paranoia finally takes form and carries her away - literally... Beautifully shot by Vittorio Storaro, with a poignant score from Nicola Piovani, Luigi Bazzoni's film strains at the boundaries of the *giallo*. It has more in common with Alfred Hitchcock or Roman Polanski than Dario Argento or even Bazzoni's own **THE FIFTH CORD** (1971). The nearest contemporary Italian film to it stylistically would perhaps be Francesco Barilli's **THE PERFUME OF THE LADY IN BLACK** (1974), which also merges reality, dreams and madness to good effect. Top-billed star Klaus Kinski only has about a minute's worth of total screen time, but you won't care too much as Bolkan and Elmi are joined by Lila Kedrova and Evelyn Stewart (Ida Galli) who more than suffice.

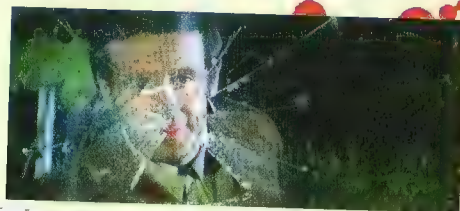
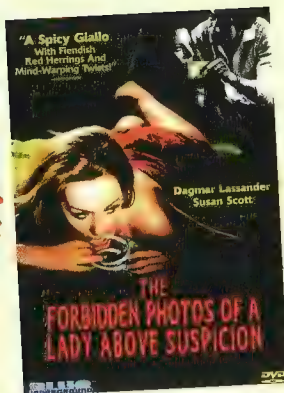


Alternative Title: Le Orme / Primal Impulse
Year of Production: 1974
Directed by Luigi Bazzoni
Cast: Florinda Bolkan, Peter McEnery, Lila Kedrova, Nicoletta Elmi, Klaus Kinski, Caterina Boratto, Evelyn Stewart, John Karlsen
Running Time: 92 mins. approx.
DVD Label: n/a.

Alternative Title: Giornata Nera Per L'Ariete
Year of Production: 1971
Directed by Luigi Bazzoni
Cast: Franco Nero, Silvia Monti, Wolfgang Preiss, Edmund Purdom, Agostina Belli, Ira Von Fürstenberg, Renato Romano, Maurizio Bonuglia
Running Time: 95 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Blue Underground (USA), King Records (Japan), Filmax (Spain)



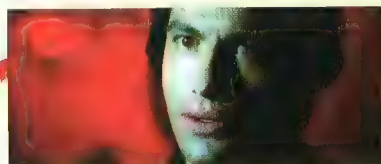
forbidden photos of a lady above suspicion



One night while out walking alone, Minou (Dagmar Lassander) is attacked and threatened by a strange man (Simón Andreu), who claims her husband Peter (Pier Paolo Capponi) is a killer, having disposed of a business rival... Uncertain of what to do, Minou finds herself drawn into a seedy world of blackmail, forced sex and the constant fear that Peter may not be the kindly man he appears to be. Who can she turn to and really trust to help her escape this unfolding nightmare?



Luciano Ercoli's **THE FORBIDDEN PHOTOS OF A LADY ABOVE SUSPICION** opens with what has to be one of the coolest and sexiest credits sequences ever to grace an early Seventies *giallo* - the sight and sound of Dagmar Lassander's character musing erotically in the bathtub, whilst a groovy female vocal burbles breathy inanities over a cool Morricone score (this fabulous theme is replayed at regular intervals throughout) and the camera prowls around the wonderful period *décor*. Thankfully, the rest of this gleefully politically incorrect film is also as attention-holding, with yet another convoluted Ernesto Gastaldi script for the cast to get to grips with, which they do with commendable enthusiasm. Dagmar Lassander is a little annoying at times as the wishy-washy Minou, but the viewer feels for her plight, especially during the SM-tinged sex sessions she's forced to endure with Simón Andreu's truly slimy nameless blackmailer in a room decorated with eerie disembodied plaster hands and limbs. In a nod to future Ercoli *gialli* the director's wife Nieves Navarro (Susan Scott) proves she has the capacity to dominate the screen, almost stealing Lassander's thunder at times, as the enigmatic Dominique. Some critics don't consider this film to be a *giallo* proper, but that point is debatable; **THE FORBIDDEN PHOTOS OF A LADY ABOVE SUSPICION** remains a gripping, well-made and satisfying time-capsule from a halcyon era for Euro-Thrillers.



Alternative Title: Le Foto Proibite Di Una Signora Per Bene
Year of Production: 1970
Directed by Luciano Ercoli
Cast: Dagmar Lassander, Pier Paolo Capponi, Simón Andreu, Susan Scott, Osvaldo Genazzani, Salvador Hueget
Running Time: 96 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Blue Underground (USA)

formula for a murder



As a young child Joanna (Christina Nagy) was sexually abused by a false priest, and was crippled by falling down a flight of steps. Now the rich benefactress of a centre for paraplegics, the wheel-chair-bound woman is wooed by - and eventually marries - the centre's occupational therapist Craig (David Warbeck), to the apparent disquiet of her jealous companion Ruth (Carrol Blumemberg). Following the wedding, Joanna finds herself haunted by a sinister priest, brandishing a bloodstained doll... A psychotic killer is on the loose and it seems the crippled woman is to be his next victim!



Alberto de Martino, best known for his **EXORCIST** rip-off **THE ANTICHRIST** (1974) and the **OMEN**-inspired **HOLocaust 2000** (1977), delivers a savage and sleazy *giallo* with 1985's US-set **FORMULA FOR A MURDER**. Top-billers Christina Nagy and Spaghetti Splatter stalwart David Warbeck impress, though Warbeck's OTT spazz-outs can be somewhat hammy. The plot utilises the well-worn *giallo* standby of the wicked/false priest, and also riffs on themes familiar from **LES DIABOLIQUES** and even Pete Walker's grisly **HOUSE OF MORTAL SIN** (yes, really!)... Some music cues are lifted from Lucio Fulci's **NEW YORK RIPPER**. Director de Martino invests the clichéd storyline with a modicum of style and lashings of Italianate violence, including a priest having his throat slit whilst taking confession, a candlestick clubbing, and the killer - whose identity is revealed long before the tense finale - slashing and stabbing Carrol Blumemberg's character to death frenziedly in a show-stopping scene... **FORMULA FOR A MURDER** ends on an enigmatic note after all the bloody mayhem, and is certainly one of the better *gialli* to emerge from the 1980s.

Alternative Title: 7 Hyden Park: La Casa Maledetta
Year of Production: 1985
Directed by Alberto de Martino
Cast: Christina Nagy, David Warbeck, Carrol Blumemberg, Rossano Brazzi, Andrea Bosic, Loris Loddi, Adriana Giuffrè, Daniela De Carolis
Running Time: 85 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Avo Film (Italy)

four flies on grey velvet



After being stalked for a number of days by a mysterious man, rock drummer Roberto Tobias (Michael Brandon) challenges him in a deserted theatre and, following a brief struggle, apparently stabs him to death... The incident is photographed by a sinister masked figure who begins sending incriminating stills and accusing notes to the drummer's home, which he shares with his wife Nina (Mimsy Farmer). When his persecutor turns to murder - slaying his maid Amelia (Marissa Fabbri), Roberto seeks help from a number of unlikely sources, including high-camp private detective Gianni Arrosio (Jean-Pierre Marielle), as it becomes clear the killer can come and go as he pleases in Roberto's world, without fear of detection. As more people fall to the unknown assassin, Roberto confronts the unspeakable truth about his tormentor...

The final entry in Dario Argento's early Seventies animal-titled *giallo* trilogy, **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET** was also intended to signal the director's departure from the genre he'd made his own (a decision soon reversed, thankfully!). Maybe as a result of its comparative rarity, and also perhaps due to an occasionally sloppy script and a misplaced emphasis on very poor attempts at comedy (never Argento's forte...), this film is somewhat sidelined by many *giallo* fans. Whilst certainly flawed, **FOUR FLIES...** does have its merits, with a few stand-out moments such as the marvellously choreographed opening credits sequence set to an atypical Ennio Morricone Rock freak-out, the creepy moment when the maid discovers that the previously bustling children's playground she's been sitting next to is silent and empty and that she's been locked inside the deserted park with her eventual murderer, and the marvellous, ultra-slo-mo finale in which the unmasked assassin meets an inventively grisly end in a car-wreck. Michael Brandon is a shade two-dimensional as the put-upon Roberto, and there is little onscreen chemistry between him and an over-histrionic Mimsy Farmer. Elsewhere the 'what a Gay day!' antics of Jean-Pierre Marielle are cringe-inducing, and the less said about Bud Spencer and his parrot 'Jerk-off' the better... As with Argento's earlier (and far superior) **CAT O'NINE TAILS** some seriously dodgy 'B-movie' Science is involved in the unmasking of the killer. Bound to disappoint many on a first viewing, enough flashes of genius are evident throughout to save **FOUR FLIES...** from being consigned to the dustbin of *giallo* Film History.

Alternative Title: 4 Mosche Di Velluto Grigio
Year of Production: 1972
Directed by: Dario Argento
Cast: Michael Brandon, Mimsy Farmer, Bud Spencer, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Marisa Fabbri, Calisto Tanzi, Oreste Lionello, Fabrizio Moroni
Running Time: 104 mins. approx.
DVD Label: n/a

the french sex murders



When Francine (Barbara Bouchet), a prostitute in an upmarket Parisian brothel run by Madame Colette (Anita Ekberg), is murdered, suspicion falls on her final customer, Antoine Gottvaes (Pietro Martellanza) though he protests his innocence. Arrested and convicted of the crime, Antoine escapes briefly, but is decapitated in a freak accident. Professor Waldemar (Howard Vernon) begins experimenting on the severed head... When the killings continue Inspector Pontaine (Robert Sacchi) realises that the rising bodycount involves people associated with Madame Colette's bawdy house. Suspects are many - who is the real killer?



Pure Euro-cheese from start to finish, Ferdinando Merighi's **THE FRENCH SEX MURDERS** is surely one of the loopyest *gialli* to emerge from the early Seventies? Featuring the uncanny Bogart lookalike Robert Sacchi (who acts as if he doesn't realise he's supposed to be a *French* cop) and a bevy of gorgeous *giallo* babes, including an early appearance by Evelyn Kraft, the plot is light on logic but high in bared flesh and gouting gore (courtesy of Carlo ET Rambaldi); throats are slashed right, left and centre, heads roll and craniums are crushed as select location shots establish the Parisian setting for this colourful carnage and cheap, fuzz-guitar-heavy music blares discordantly at regular intervals. Jess Franco favourite Howard Vernon emotes hammily as a B-movie mad scientist with a penchant for slicing up (real) eyeballs whilst rolling his own. Barbara Bouchet is bumped off early on, Rosalba Neri gets to warble a Gallic ballad in a typically sleazy Seventies night-club and an uncredited Gordon Mitchell cuts up rough as a drunken customer. You'll roar at the ludicrous optical effect of the killer leaping from the Eiffel Tower! This being a Dick Randall production one doesn't expect top-level cinematography or widescreen framing - some scenes are lit like Porno and 'arty' shots are limited to multi-coloured tinted repeats of key murders and the perplexing decision to present a court sequence in negative... Nonetheless, **THE FRENCH SEX MURDERS** is a largely enjoyable pulp-horror romp from a director better known for the Spaghetti Western **THEY CALL HIM TRINITY** (1972).



Alternative Titles: Casa D' Appuntamento / The Bogeyman and The French Murders / Murder in Paris
Year of Production: 1972
Directed by: 'F.L. Morris' [Ferdinando Merighi]
Cast: Robert Sacchi, Anita Ekberg, Barbara Bouchet, Rosalba Neri, Evelyn Kraft, Howard Vernon, Pietro Martellanza
Running Time: 88 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Mondo Macabro (USA)

the iguana with the tongue of fire



Dublin, Ireland: when the butchered, acid-disfigured corpse of a woman is found in the boot of a car belonging to Swiss Ambassador Sobieski (Anton Diffring), he and his family fall under suspicion. Hard Sobieski (Luigi Pistilli) is called in to deal with the man ex-Inspector Norton (Luigi Pistilli) is called in to deal with the case 'unofficially'... He begins a relationship with the Ambassador's daughter Helene (Dagmar Lassander). In the meantime the killer commits more vicious murders - can Norton stop this reign of terror before the streets of Dublin are awash with blood?

Coming as it does from a director held in high regard for such stylish gothic horror films as **I VAMPIRI** (1956), **THE TERROR OF DR. HICHCOCK** (1962) and **THE GHOST** (1963), this grubby and violent shocker seems a misplaced career move for Riccardo Freda (here wisely using the nickname 'Willy Pareto'). A sterling cast does its best with what the script offers but cannot raise this clunker above the level of tasteless mediocrity. Dublin locations add a certain visual interest, but apart from a sequence where Dagmar Lassander is pursued by the straight-razor-toting killer through fog-shrouded streets, they are for the most part underused. Directed with very little of the visual verve associated with the aforementioned Freda films, **THE IGUANA WITH THE TONGUE OF FIRE** dwells lovingly on a series of poorly conceived and sadistic slasher-murders, culminating with a jaw-dropping double assault in which a semi-naked teenage girl has her face forced against a sunlamp and her unfortunate granny's head is rammed into a sink... Amongst the OTT blood-spattered set-pieces some unintentional humour surfaces - the revelation of the killer's identity being a case in point as well as a peculiar obsession with dark glasses (almost everybody in Dublin, including the psycho, wears them it would appear...) - and the film seems to be summed up by Anton Diffring's character's glum closing comment "My career is completely over..."! Clearly Freda was ill at ease with the black-gloved killer genre, and after this film only ventured into horror a few more times, with 1972's creepy **TRAGIC CEREMONY** (featuring Camille Keaton) and another lacklustre if gory giallo, **MURDER OBSESSION** (1981).

Alternative Title: L'Iguana Dalla Lingua Di Fuoco
Year of Production: 1971
Directed by Riccardo Freda
Cast: Luigi Pistilli, Dagmar Lassander, Anton Diffring, Arthur O'Sullivan, Werner Pochath, Dominique Boschero, Renato Romano, Valentina Cortese
Running Time: 94 mins. approx.
DVD Label: n/a

murder to the tune of the seven black notes



England, 1959... A woman hurls herself from the white cliffs of Dover... Simultaneously, in Florence, Italy, her young daughter Virginia (Fausta Avelli) has a vision of the terrible event. Some eighteen years later, Virginia Ducci (Jennifer O'Neill), having seen her rich husband Francesco (Gianni Garko) off on a business trip, has a vision on her way back from the airport. She sees flashes of red light, a shattered mirror, a murdered woman's blood-stained face, a limping man, a magazine cover, a recess in a wall and other images... During renovation work on her husband's villa, a female skeleton is found walled up in a room corresponding to Virginia's psychic flash. Francesco is immediately lead suspect, the dead woman being a former girlfriend of his. Virginia sets out to uncover the killer's true identity and clear her husband's name, and soon begins to suspect her vision was not a memory from the past after all, but a dire premonition... Her own life may be in peril!

Coming at the tail-end of the Seventies giallo boom, Lucio Fulci's **MURDER TO THE TUNE OF THE SEVEN BLACK NOTES** was not received with open arms and open minds by contemporary cinema audiences, much to its distress (he viewed it as one of his most accomplished films). Markedly less violent than Fulci's previous gialli, its more leisurely pace harks back to **ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER** (1969). However, the plot weaves and twists satisfyingly as Virginia is led deeper and deeper into an increasingly threatening mystery, and holds one's attention throughout. Fabio Frizzi helped provide an emotive score, and the beautifully composed camerawork comes courtesy of Sergio Salvati. The cast is strong, with many a recognisable face popping up throughout, and the attractive O'Neill in particular essays her character well, managing to convey (in the English-dubbed version at least) the problems encountered by a foreigner abroad, as in the hunt for an elusive address that turns out to be just nearby, but takes ages to find because Virginia hasn't pronounced the Italian name correctly! The plot has a kind of inexorable flow to it, with everything pulling Virginia, and with her the audience, towards its grim and tense finale... All the parts of the puzzle slot together and the very last minutes of **MURDER TO THE TUNE OF THE SEVEN BLACK NOTES** are satisfyingly downbeat, and timed to perfection. Not as disposable a thriller as some would have you believe.

Alternative Titles: Sette Notte In Nero / The Psychic / L'emmurée Vivante
Year of Production: 1977
Directed by Lucio Fulci
Cast: Jennifer O'Neill, Gianni Garko, Fausta Avelli, Marc Porel, Evelyn Stewart, Fabrizio Jovine
Running Time: 98 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Neo Publishing (France), Alfa Digital (USA)

L'emmurée vivante

DVD

Fulci

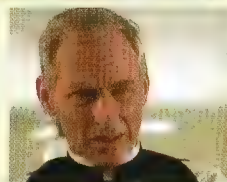


nightmare beach



A biker, Diablo (Tony Bolano), is sent to the electric chair for a crime for which he claims he was framed, promising to return from the dead to exact his revenge... Shortly afterwards his body is stolen, and a rash of bizarre electrocution killings threaten to spoil the Spring Break celebrations in a Florida coastal resort. A young man, Skip (Nicholas De Toth) and a barmaid called Gail (Sarah Buxton), whose sister was supposedly killed by Diablo, team up to try to track down and unmask the murderous biker terrorising the community. With even Mayor Loomis (Fred Buck) and twisted cop Strycher (John Saxon) out to silence them, the doughty duo have more than the psychopathic killer to contend with...

Structured more on the American Stalk and Slash blueprint as seen in films like 1981's **TERROR EYES** (with even the biker killer here resembling that film's psycho) than the giallo proper, this lame Florida-set thriller plays for much of the time like a stupid T & A-obsessed Frat-Comedy with added gore - and even that isn't up to much. Far too many characters are introduced, built up to seem important to the story only to vanish abruptly, leaving the viewer puzzled and irritated - what was all that stuff about the thieving Jack-the-lad 'Breaker', and the promiscuous Reverend's daughter? Why sideline characters arguably more interesting than the two young leads (Nicholas De Toth and Sarah Buxton)? And the offscreen demise of Saxon's sadistic bent cop (a decent enough, if OTT, turn from this reliable actor) is a cheat too, given the build-up. Poor electrocution effects make one yearn for the good old straight razor/flick-knife mayhem of this film's Continental forebears. The killer's real identity will hardly prove a surprise to seasoned giallo buffs. A plodding and tiresome film with little to recommend it - especially the turgid late Eighties Rock soundtrack, jaw-dropping 'fashions' and hideous hairstyles, it's best to stay away from Umberto Lenzi's Yankee-style yawnfest **NIGHTMARE BEACH**.



Alternative Titles: Nightmare Beach - La Spiaggia Del Terrore / Welcome To Spring Break
Year of Production: 1988
Directed by Umberto Lenzi.
Cast: Tony Bolano, Nicholas De Toth, Sarah Buxton, Rawley Valverde, Lance LeGault, John Saxon, Michael Parks, Fred Buck
Running Time: 92 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: DVD Storm (Italy), Image (USA)

off balance



In the watery locales of Venice, a female doctor is killed with a sword, and when shortly afterwards the girlfriend of famous pianist Robert Dominici (Michael York) is butchered in similar fashion it appears that a serial killer is at large... Top cop Inspector Datti (Donald Pleasance) is certain the suave musician is the guilty party, but is puzzled that with subsequent slayings the description of the assassin changes, and DNA evidence points to the killer in each case being older than before. Datti seems to be searching for more than one person, but could the answer to the mystery be even more incredible?



Ruggero Deodato has spent his post-CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST career attempting to claw his way out of its suffocating shadow. In every case he has failed, though he did his damndest with **OFF BALANCE**, an entertaining and truly original giallo. A well-chosen cast give the intriguing script their best shots, with York in particular depicting with genuine pathos the cruel disintegration of his world through the thankfully rare disease Progeria. Interestingly, here we are given a killer who we cannot help but feel pity towards, even as we deplore his violent actions. The make-up employed to age York throughout is superb, and the gore effects are startlingly gruesome too, as swords and various sharp implements slice through throats to unleash majestic fountains of blood à la **SHOGUN ASSASSIN**! Subtler moments are provided by a sequence set during Venice's famous Carnival and when the increasing bitter and frail killer befriends an old abandoned dog. Pleasance is fine if occasionally OTT in his role as the baffled plod, and Seventies giallo-babe Edwige Fenech proves she can still play the part of the luscious would-be victim. A late Eighties Italian Horror highlight.



Alternative Titles: Un Delitto Poco Comune / Phantom of Death / Der Tod Wartet in Venedig
Year of Production: 1988
Directed By Ruggero Deodato
Cast: Michael York, Donald Pleasance, Edwige Fenech, Caterina Boratto, Giovanni Lombardo Radice, Mapi Galán.
Running Time: 89 mins. approx.
DVD Label: X-Rated (Germany), CVC (Italy)

plot of fear



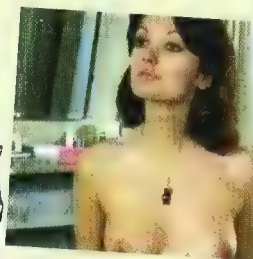
Regia di Paolo Cavara



A rich masochist is strangled by a cross-dressing prostitute, a woman has her head bashed in on board a late night bus... At these and subsequent crime scenes, an illustration from the old German children's book **STRUWWELPETER** is left as the assassin's calling card. The Milan police think a single killer is at work, but are otherwise struggling. With the help of attractive model Jeanne (Corinne Clery), Inspector Lorenzo (Michelle Placido) uncovers a murky plot involving a group of wealthy swingers and the mysterious death of a young prostitute, Rosa Catena (Sarah Crespi), at one of their sex parties at the Villa Hoffman. Are these murders merely revenge for Rosa's death or part of a more sinister plot involving politics and blackmail?



Having given us one of the better early Seventies *gialli* with the exemplary **THE BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA**, Paolo Cavara turned in this tautly-plotted, thought-provoking thriller to show that he was no one-shot wonder. With a scenario that relies less on gory killings (bar the splatery bus murder and a horrific burning) than politically-tinged, sex and sleaze-drenched goings-on, **PLOT OF FEAR** is perhaps a little too clever at times, and the finale seems rushed after the highly involving build-up. However, overall it's a worthy attempt to reinvigorate the *giallo*, with a storyline whose themes have links to those expressed in simpler terms in the then-popular Cop Thrillers. Both Placido's stressed-out Inspector, and Clery's sexy and ambiguous Jeanne make for engaging characters. Though Tom Skerit is somewhat underused, elsewhere John Steiner is suitably creepy as the scheming Hoffman - whose character name is but one clever link to the gleefully sadistic children's book featured throughout, and Eli Wallach is in fine fettle. You've got to love that cool fuzz-guitar opening theme by Daniele Patucci! Why Paolo Cavara never produced more *gialli* is a total mystery, he had the winning touch. What a waste...



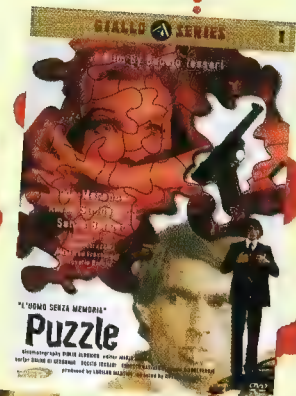
Alternative Title: E Tanta Paura
Year of Production: 1976
Directed by Paolo Cavara
Cast: Tom Skerrit, Michelle Placido, Corinne Clery,
John Steiner, Sarah Crespi, Eli Wallach, Jacques Herlin
Running Time: 91 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Raro (Italy)



puzzle



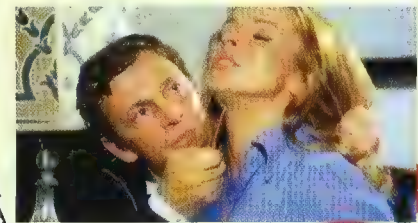
A young man, Peter (Luc Merenda), suffering from amnesia following a car crash in England, is threatened with death by a stranger, who informs him his real name is Edward Walden. The stranger is shot dead by an unknown assassin. Edward travels to Portofino, Italy, where he finds his wife Sara (Senta Berger), an American woman, waiting for him. The couple attempt to restart their relationship, but Edward is once more harassed by a stranger - the sniper who saved him earlier - demanding the return of heroin worth a million dollars. Slowly the pieces of the puzzle of Edward's missing memories begin to slot together, but the picture forming is not a pretty one...



Having already directed a couple of *giallo* gems in **DEATH OCCURRED LAST NIGHT** and **BLOODSTAINED BUTTERFLY**, Duccio Tessari turned to the genre once more with this little seen and until recently unsung Euro-thriller, whose relative obscurity seems somewhat, er, puzzling.... Boasting a typically adroit Ernesto Gastaldi script which borrows from **WAIT UNTIL DARK** thematically, **PUZZLE** also features a well-balanced and largely believable pairing of Luc Merenda and Senta Berger as the main leads, some lovely but understated location photography, and even a bit of chainsaw mayhem shamelessly modelled after the finale of Wes Craven's **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT**. True, there are less of the expected *giallo* slasher elements here, but there's a nifty fisticuffs scene which contains a few wince-inducing moments, and a particularly unpleasant straight-razor assault on the luscious Ms. Berger which has to have influenced Brian De Palma's **DRESSED TO KILL** - you'll know it when you see it. As with many Seventies Italian films **PUZZLE** highlights a precocious child character, here essayed by bratty but likeable Duilio Cruciani as budding photographer Luca, a young boy whose serious crush on Berger's character plays an essential part in the gripping finale. The film's conclusion may strike the viewer as being more downbeat than one might expect, just another of the quirks that make this particular Tessari film stand out from the *giallo* ranks.



Alternative Title: L'Uomo Senza Memoria
Year of Production: 1974
Directed by Duccio Tessari
Cast: Luc Merenda, Senta Berger, Umberto Orsini, Bruno Corazzari,
Anita Strindberg, Duilio Cruciani
Running Time: 94 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Another World Entertainment (Denmark), Neo
Publishing (France)



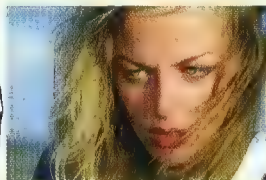
the pyjama girl case



The burned, mutilated corpse of a young woman dressed in yellow pyjamas is discovered on a beach near Sydney, Australia. Retired detective Timson (Ray Milland) blags his way into working unofficially on the case as the police blunder around ineffectually, arresting any number of false leads and suspects. As the corpse remains unidentified, the police make the odd decision to put it on general display for the public. However, this fails to help the case. When Timson stumbles on the truth the persistent detective also falls victim to the Pyjama Girl's killer. It seems the murderer has escaped justice...



An interesting relocation of the *giallo* to the Antipodes, loosely based on a notorious murder case from the 1930s, **THE PYJAMA GIRL CASE** strays so far from the usual blueprint as to find itself on the outer fringes of the genre. Almost entirely bloodless, with no black-gloved killer on the rampage and rather sedately paced for much of its running time, Flavio Mogherini's film concentrates as much on the bizarre (and occasionally brutal) methods employed by the Australian police in their attempts to crack the case (this counterpointed admirably by Milland's character's 'old school' gumshoeing) as the downward spiralling lifestyle of Linda (the lovely Dalila Di Lazzaro of **FLESH FOR FRANKEN-STEIN** fame). Some first-time viewers are disorientated by the Police investigation running parallel to unfolding flashbacks of Linda's life, something not immediately apparent. Di Lazzaro gives a strong performance as the free-loving girl who could have easily become a stereotypical slut which the audience would not wish to identify with or pity; however, even though we might condemn some of her actions - especially during one particularly hard to watch and sleazy scene - we feel for her and wince at her brutal and abject end. Through the characters of Antonio (Michele Placido), Linda's Italian husband, and Roy Conner (Howard Ross), the script subtly depicts the sense of alienation felt by European working-class immigrants to Australia, with Antonio's final despairing rant being particularly poignant. Mel Ferrer is a welcome cast member, but it is Ray Milland's Inspector Timson who really impresses and who is given some stand-out scenes (his mimed masturbation taunt is a show-stopper!). A final mention should go to Riz Ortolani's electro-funk-heavy soundtrack and the two Amanda Lear numbers, including the irritatingly catchy opening titles song...



RAY MILLAND DALILA DI LAZZARO MICHELE PLACIDO MEL FERRER

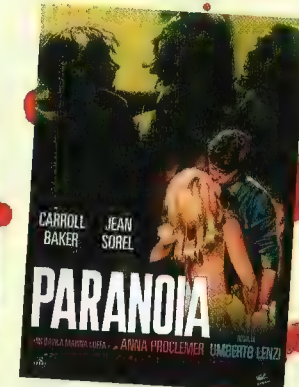


Alternative Title: La Ragazza Dal Pigiama Giallo
Year of Production: 1977
Directed by Flavio Mogherini
Cast: Ray Milland, Dalila Di Lazzaro, Michele Placido, Mel Ferrer, Howard Ross, Rod Mullinar, Ramiro Oliveros, Giacomo Assandri, Eugene Walter, Antonio Ferrandis, Vanessa Vitale
Running Time: 102 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Blue Underground (USA), Manga Films (Spain)

a quiet place to kill



Following a terrible racing-car accident, Helen (Carroll Baker) is invited to the Majorca home of her rich, philandering ex-husband Maurice (Jean Sorel). Turns out the actual invite came from Maurice's latest wife Constance (Anna Proclemer), so sick of her husband that she is plotting murder, attempting to rope Helen into her scheme... However, the plan goes awry, with Maurice turning the tables - and a knife - on Constance, killing her instead. Helen, trapped by circumstances, becomes an unwilling accomplice to the crime, and the situation worsens when Constance's teenage daughter Susan (Marina Coffa) turns up and becomes suspicious...



Following the success of both Umberto Lenzi's **SO SWEET, SO PERVERSE** and **ORGASMO** (both 1969 - the latter also rather confusingly known as **PARANOIA**), which also starred Carroll **BABY DOLL** Baker, another similar-themed film was rapidly commissioned for the busy director. Though this type of plot - the 'two's company, three's a crowd' murder triangle - was already becoming well-worn by the early Seventies, **A QUIET PLACE TO KILL** benefits greatly from a more assured central performance from Baker, and both Jean Sorel as slimy playboy Maurice, and Marina Coffa as the weasel-sharp teenage temptress Susan make for some sizzling sexually tense scenes in the second half of the film. Whilst not really a classic *giallo* in visual terms (no black-gloved killer or prowling POV camera here), this remains an involving and densely plotted erotic-thriller which will keep you guessing, and throws up a few good twists in the tale before the satisfying denouement. It looks great too, with Aristide Massaccesi ('Joe D'Amato') providing fine 'scope camerawork throughout. Carroll Baker worked subsequently with Lenzi on the more stereotypical Italo-Spanish *giallo* **KNIFE OF ICE** in 1972, as well as appearing in an array of Euro-trash films for other directors throughout the Seventies.



Alternative Title: Paranoia
Year of Production: 1970
Directed by Umberto Lenzi
Cast: Carroll Baker, Jean Sorel, Anna Proclemer, Marina Coffa, Alberto Dalbés, Luis Dávila
Running Time: 90 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Millennium Storm (Italy), TMV (Japan)

NO SHAME!
LA DAMA ROSSA
UCCIDE SETTE VOLTE

the red queen kills seven times



BARBARA BOUCHET • UGO PAGLIAI
MARINA MALFATTI

DIR. EMILIO P. MIRAGLIA



The Wildenbrück family has an ancient curse hanging over it - every one hundred years the legendary 'Red Queen' returns to avenge her original murder by seeking out seven new victims... Following her Grandfather's mysterious death and a rash of grisly murders centred around the Springe fashion house, Kitty Wildenbrück (Barbara Bouchet) becomes convinced that the family Nemesis has come back in the form of her dead sister Eveline. Is Kitty to be the final victim of the avenging 'Red Queen'?

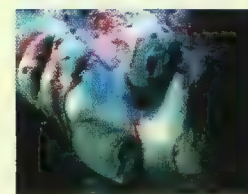
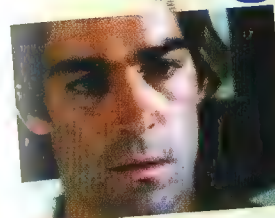


Despite lacking the lurid SM-laced psychedelic excess of his earlier **THE NIGHT EVELYN CAME OUT OF THE GRAVE** (1971), Emilio P. Miraglia's follow-up is just as much fun, and arguably a more coherent giallo, though it too has its fair share of daffy moments and a slightly rushed finale. Set once again in the (over) familiar world of fashion models (Bava's **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** has much to answer for!), **THE RED QUEEN KILLS SEVEN TIMES** flirts with a gothic-horror/supernatural theme, before the plot slides rapidly into the usual *mélange* of flashing steel, screaming girls and spraying gore, heading towards a rat-riddled sub-Gaston Leroux denouement... There's plenty of nubile female flesh on display, including that of Sybil Danning (**HOWLING** 2) in one of her early roles. The luscious Barbara Bouchet is fine as the guilt-haunted Kitty, and Marina Malfatti (also seen in **EVELYN**) is suitably ambiguous as her half-sister Franziska. Elsewhere Ugo Pagliai is somewhat subdued - even ineffectual - as Kitty's boss/boyfriend Martin Hoffman. The German locations are well-used by cinematographer Alberto Spagnoli, imbuing the storyline with *krimi* overtones (the film was a co-production with W. Germany), and the catchy Bruno Nicolai score will stick in your brain for hours. The pre-credits sequence features a vicious preteen catfight between the young Kitty and bad seed sister Eveline that sets the tone nicely for the ensuing shenanigans!

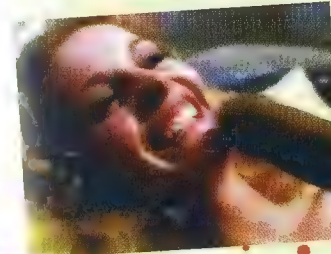
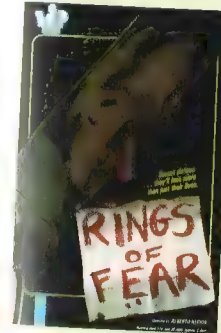
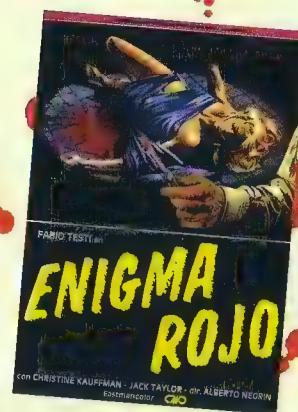


Alternative Title: La Dama Rossa Uccide Sette Volte
Year of Production: 1972
Directed by Emilio Miraglia
Cast: Barbara Bouchet, Marina Malfatti, Sybil Danning, Ugo Pagliai, Marino Masé, Pia Giancaro, Rudolph Shindler, Carla Mancini
Running Time: 98 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: NoShame (Italy/USA)

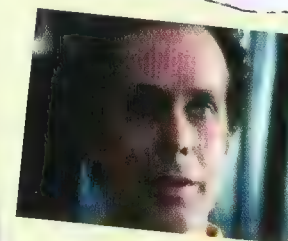
rings of fear



A teenage girl, Angela Russo, is found murdered and sexually mutilated... Soon her killer is seemingly stalking the surviving pupils of St. Theresa's School For Girls. The dead girl's friends - a clique known as 'The Inseparables' - receive threatening messages from a mysterious person using the nickname 'Nemesis', and bizarre accidents begin to befall them... Inspector De Salvo (Fabio Testi) sets out on the killer's trail, with the unlikely help of Angela Russo's kid sister Emily (Fausta Avelli). Can 'Nemesis' be unmasked before more young girls meet a violent end?



An effective giallo, possibly intended to form part of Massimo Dallamano's 'schoolgirl sex crime' series begun in 1971 with **WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SOLANGE?**, and continued with **WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOUR DAUGHTERS?** (1974), had not his tragic death prevented him from helming **RINGS OF FEAR**: Dallamano's name remains as one of several script-writers, and the plot - another schoolgirl sex-ring run by "rich, influential men" - certainly chimes with his earlier films. Replacement director Alberto Negrin delivers an agreeably sleazy, modishly violent thriller, with enough teenage nudity, terse dialogue, giallo gore and action-packed chase sequences to please most viewers. Different edits were prepared for the contributing countries (Italy/Spain/West Germany), and censorship often reduces the impact of a graphic dildo-rape scene. Fabio Testi - impressive as the no-nonsense Inspector Di Salvo - has surely never had such an unorthodox and charming onscreen 'partner' as young red-head Fausta Avelli (**DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING** (1972), **MURDER TO THE TUNE OF THE SEVEN BLACK NOTES** (1977)), and there is some great interplay between them, especially during the offbeat conclusion which reveals the unlikely identity of 'Nemesis'.



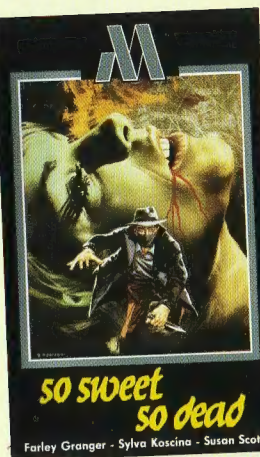
Alternative Titles: Enigma Rosso / Trauma / Virgin Terror
Year of Production: 1978
Directed by Alberto Negrin
Cast: Fabio Testi, Ivan Desny, Bruno Alessandro, Jack Taylor, Christine Kaufmann, Fausta Avelli, Brigitte Wagner, Caroline Ohrner, Silvia Aguilar
Running Time: 94 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Mill Creek Entertainment (USA)



A close-up photograph of a woman's face, looking upwards with a green leaf held near her nose. The image is tilted slightly to the right.



so sweet, so dead



A highly selective killer plagues a small Italian town, seeking out and butchering only unfaithful women from the higher social ranks, leaving photographic proof of their infidelities by their bodies... Inspector Capuana (Farley Granger) is on the black-gloved miscreant's trail, but the killer stays one step ahead of him as more women pay the price for their sins. A police pathologist, Professor Casali (Chris Avram), believes the murderer uses a knife as a substitute phallus, the killings being sexual acts by proxy... When Inspector Capuana discovers both the killer's identity, and his own wife's infidelities, he decides to turn events to his own advantage!

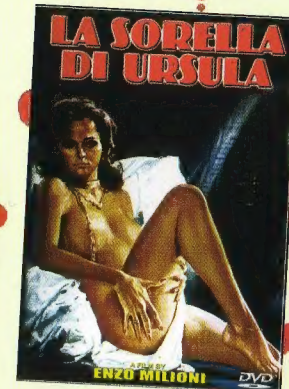


A distinctly grubby and overtly misogynistic *giallo*, **SO SWEET, SO DEAD** wallows in its graphic gore and sleaze to a slightly uncomfortable degree. Directed efficiently rather than stylishly by Roberto Montero, at least it's never dull as Fausto Rossi's camera homes in on the plentiful female (and male) nakedness and gushing grue that saturate the screenplay. Farley Granger is workmanlike as the beleaguered Inspector, the most memorable character being provided by Luciano Rossi's creepy necrophiliac morgue attendant Gastone, a loopy red-herring if ever there was one! The killer is clearly modelled on the one from Mario Bava's **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**, but there all comparisons end! Giorgio Gaslini's effective score will work its way into your brain more thoroughly than the routine script will, but **SO SWEET, SO DEAD** is harmless if reactionary fun for *giallo* fans. The cynical, cruel ending is a surprise. In America the film's distributors decided it wasn't sleazy enough(!?) and added hardcore porno inserts featuring pork-sword supremo Harry Reems and other skin-flick luminaries, releasing the whole blood and spunk-drenched farrago as **PENETRATION!** Whatever turns you on, I guess... Worth a watch in its original Euro-edit, but not a top-drawer *giallo* by any means.



Alternative Titles: Rivelazioni Di Un Maniaco Sessuale Al Capo Della Squadra Mobile / Penetration
Year of Production: 1972
Directed by Roberto [Bianchi] Montero
Cast: Farley Granger, Sylva Koscina, Silvano Tranquilli, Chris Avram, Femi Benussi, Susan Scott
Running Time: 90 mins. approx.
DVD Label: n/a

la sorella di ursula



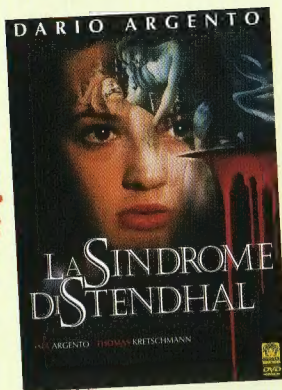
Two sisters, Ursula (Barbara Magnolfi) and Dagmar (Stefania D'Amario), check into a sea-front hotel, and almost immediately a black-gloved killer begins to bump off the clientele and various locals, utilising a somewhat unique murder weapon... An undercover cop (Marc Porel) working on a narcotics case learns that Ursula has apparently had premonitions of the sordid crimes. Can the sexually deranged assassin be stopped from killing again?



Oh dear... The script for this sleazy clunker must have looked like the dream ticket for the producers of **LA SORELLA DI URSULA**: a *giallo* packed with graphic near-hardcore sex scenes and a killer who has taken the 'murder weapon as phallic symbol' notion a tad too much to heart. Sadly, director Enzo Milioni seems to have modelled his filmmaking style on early Seventies Jess Franco, and subsequently the grimy goings-on are buried beneath zombie-like 'acting' from all and sundry (Barbara Magnolfi rates this film as some of her worst work, and how right she is!), with even the usually reliable Marc Porel looking out of place. Add in lazily composed cinematography, a cheapo synthesiser soundtrack and a night-club singer called 'Stella Shining' drearily intoning a song called 'Eyes' over and over and ennui rapidly sets into the viewer, closely followed by rigor mortis... Even the murder sequences are badly filmed (those damn eye close-ups!) and further hampered by censor cuts in all known prints, and the viewer will surely work out who the killer is about five minutes into the film when the 'implement' employed is prominently displayed in a central character's hotel room - oops! Death by dildo was done better in Alberto Negrin's **RINGS OF FEAR** in any case. **LA SORELLA DI URSULA** is best summed up by a queasy shot of a hirsute middle-aged man avidly tonguing-out a woman's butt-crack. You have been warned...



Alternative Title: Curse of Ursula
Year of Production: 1978
Directed by Enzo Milioni
Cast: Barbara Magnolfi, Stefania D'Amario, Marc Porel, Vanni Materassi, Anna Zineman, Yvonne Harlow
Running Time: 90 mins. approx.
DVD Label: Shoarma Digital (USA)



the stendhal syndrome



Whilst searching for a serial rapist-killer in Florence, Inspector Anna Manni (Asia Argento), visits an art gallery and is overcome by emotion whilst looking at the paintings. She faints, and when revived has temporarily lost her memory. Back in her hotel room she experiences further hallucinations and is raped by the killer (Thomas Kretschmann), who then lets her go. Unable to relate to her work or her boyfriend following this trauma, Anna returns to her childhood home in Viterbo. The killer continues his bloody spree, and Anna feels he is playing a deadly game with her. And then the killer abducts her, stashing her in his lair and once again sexually abusing her. Can Anna turn the tables on this psychopath?

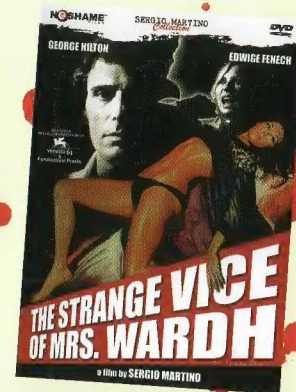


Many Dario Argento fans, disappointed by **OPERA** and **TRAUMA**, had high hopes that **THE STENDHAL SYNDROME** would be a return to top form for the wayward director as the Nineties progressed. Sadly, despite containing some of the nastiest sexual violence seen in a *giallo* hijinks, it proved a seriously uneven film, with Argento's photogenic daughter Asia - impressive enough in **TRAUMA** - all too obviously unable to carry such a pivotal role convincingly. Thomas Kretschmann is altogether more effective as the sadistic killer - this sicko really means business... The film looks good, apart from some *terrible* CGI interludes, and Morricone provides another cool score but once past the point where even Barbie would turn her plastic snub-nose up at **THE STENDHAL SYNDROME** goes from humdrum to horrendous. A weak Argento entry, with all too few of the classic *giallo* touches one might hope to see from The Master.

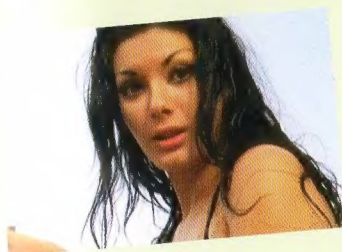


Alternative Title: La Sindrome Di Stendhal
Year of Production: 1996
Directed by Dario Argento
Cast: Asia Argento, Thomas Kretschmann, Marco Leonardi, Julien Lambroschini, Luigi Diberti, John Quentin.
Running Time: 118 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: Medusa (Italy), Troma (USA), Tartan (UK)

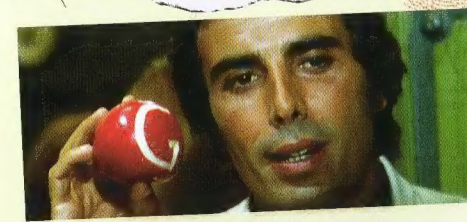
the strange vice of mrs. wardh



A serial sex-killer is butchering the prostitutes of Vienna... Julie Wardh (Edwige Fenech) - trapped in a deteriorating marriage to stockbroker husband Neil (Alberto De Mendoza) - flies into the terrorised city and finds herself at the centre of a nightmare, as the killer seemingly targets her, murdering her close friend Carol (Cristina Airolti) for good measure. Julie is convinced her sadistic ex-lover Jean (Ivan Rassimov) is to blame. Rich playboy George Corro (George Hilton) seems to offer her a way out of her marriage doldrums, and an escape route from the black-gloved Ripper - but is anyone to be fully trusted, and where does safety lie for Julie Wardh?



Along with Dario Argento's **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE** (1970), Sergio Martino's first foray into the nascent *giallo* genre helped to consolidate all the rules and visual quirks associated with these films (black-leather gloves, cut-throat razors, red herrings-a-go-go...). In fact **THE STRANGE VICE OF MRS. WARDH** almost over-eggs the cake, piling on so much sex, violence and *outré* action that parts of the plot become almost parodic. Nonetheless, this is one hell of a slick, fast-moving Euro-thriller, packed with bizarre camera angles, weird psychedelic SM-tinged flashbacks and dream sequences, plenty of female nudity and bloody straight-razor slashings - there's even a grisly shower murder to underline the Hitchcockian nature of the script (which builds to a Sitges-set climax both clever and jaw-droppingly unlikely!). Edwige Fenech captivates as the hassled heroine - it's not difficult to see why she was hailed as a *giallo* goddess - and this film saw her first-time pairing with handsome hunk George Hilton - a charismatic coupling that director Martino exploited in subsequent *gialli*. Ivan Rassimov makes a suitably sneering sadist. The Nora Orlandi score - complete with eerie wailing female voices - is exceptional and unforgettable.



Alternative Titles: Lo Strano vizio della Signora Wardh / Blade of the Ripper / Next
Year of Production: 1971
Directed by Sergio Martino
Cast: George Hilton, Edwige Fenech, Alberto De Mendoza, Cristina Airolti, Ivan Rassimov, Bruno Corazzari, Manuel Gil, Carlo Alighiero
Running Time: 98 mins. approx.
DVD Labels: NoShame (USA), Alan Young (Italy), Koch Media (Germany)



you'll die at midnight



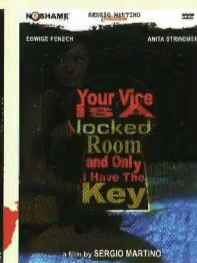
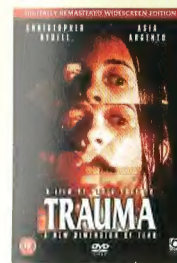
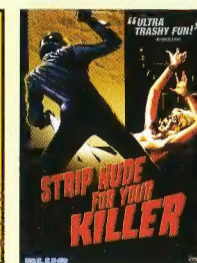
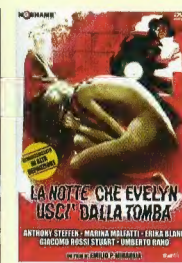
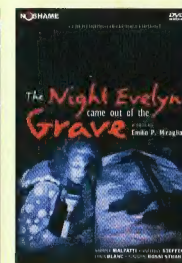
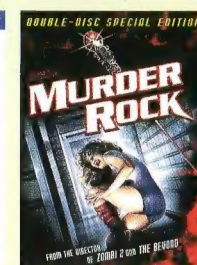
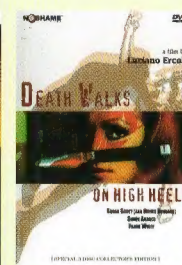
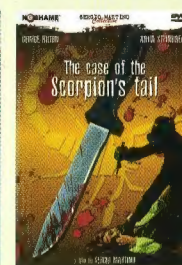
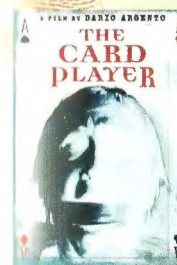
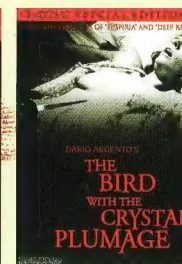
Police officer Nicola Levi (Leonardo Treviglio) falls under suspicion when, following a domestic dispute, his unfaithful wife is murdered in the shower with an ice-pick. A police psychologist, Anna Berardi (Valeria D'Obici), doubts Nicola's guilt, her theory is that a supposedly dead serial killer, Franco Tribbo, has survived and is beginning a new killing spree. When a young student, Carol (Lara Wendel) - daughter of Inspector Pierro Terzi (Paolo Malco) - is threatened by the psycho, she leaves town with two friends to continue her studies in a deserted out-of-season hotel by the sea. However, the black-gloved killer has followed them, and more bloody deaths seem certain...



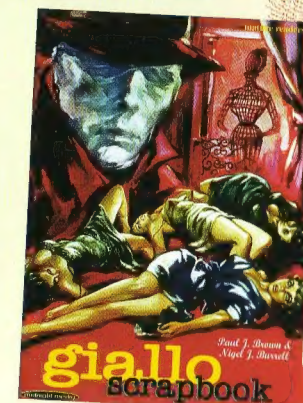
As other Italian Horror directors like Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci saw their careers sliding downhill during the mid to late Eighties, so Lamberto Bava saw his on the ascendancy following the International success of **DEMONS** (1985). Returning to the giallo format he'd proved proficient with for 1982's **A BLADE IN THE DARK**, Bava Jr. turned in what remains his best stab at the genre with **YOU'LL DIE AT MIDNIGHT**. Something of a homage to earlier gialli, with visual references to **BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE**, **TORSO** and **TENEBRAE**, the plot is of course both derivative and cruelly misogynistic, which makes the final revelation of the killer's ID somewhat unlikely (and hardly a surprise to sharp-eyed viewers). Paolo Malco is great as Inspector Terzi, and boy-cropped Lara Wendel is cool as the spunky final girl. Though less violent than **BLADE...**, the murders are graphic enough, though a sexual mutilation with a food-blender is mercifully kept offscreen. A great techno-rock soundtrack from Claudio Simonetti is the creamy icing on a very tasty cake here.



Alternative Titles: Morirai A Mezzanotte / Midnight Ripper
Year of Production: 1986
Directed by Lamberto Bava
Cast: Paolo Malco, Lara Wendel, Valeria D'Obici, Leonardo Treviglio, Lea Martino, Gianpaolo Saccarola
Running Time: 88 mins. approx.
DVD Label: X-Rated (Germany)



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mature readers